



An rud is annamh is iontach. What is seldom is wonderful.

Happy Ryan New Year To Youns All! Well, can it already be the start of yet another AWE full of the comings and goings of the Brussels-bound wee'er band of Ameri-Irish known within and beyond these shores and sores as the Ryans? I guess t'is and since your guest is as good as mine it's time to mine the archives of Ryan Year 09 (RY09) (aren't you glad I didn't say mime?) in this the official NYC version (not-yet copyrighted) of our Annual Wee Epistle (AWE-10). On behalf of the lepers and cons, or is that leprechauns, of this tribe please let me officially and unabashedly welcome you dear reader, dear friend, and future guest to Volume 18 of the Ryan Hysterical Chronicles marking and remarking the official start of the eighteenth year of our being heavier with child(ren) but lighter of heart, that is 2010 AD (Anticipating Debt) and commemorating in print the increasingly unbelievable but-all-too-true achievements of our progeny during the aforementioned RY09. For those as of yet unaccustomed to this annual inundation and those so annually inundated, let me gently remind that good Irish Catholic guilt drove us to this end. To wit, married and soon harried we carried our cherubic exuberance of our first born through Christmas and well into spring with nary a word to family or friend despite the warmest and friendliest of holiday wishes all unrequited in the extreme. We therefore undertook to make annual amends with the same enthusiasm, charm, wit & wonder, and above all warmth of spirit(s) we had received lo those months before. And so we thank you all again for those cards and letters and ask unreservedly that you keep them coming & whether you hear from us or not, rest assured that you are in our prayers! Now, before Saint Patrick drives this snake once again from his late winter lurkings, (& before the Guinness and whiskey take hold) hang 10 for Another Wild Episode.

The tribe, as you can see at right, is for the most part incredibly good looking (3 out of 4 ain't bad) and therefore began the year enjoying tea at the Ritz in London to celebrate Michael Elder's (ME) birthday, with the kids compensation for said hoity toity'ness a trip Camden Town to see this year's monochrome fashion innovations ("I love this in black!" "Do you have a matching black skirt?" "Ooo... accessorizing in black is so cool..." and so it goes). Michael Younger's (MY) son's first-ever Les Mis experience was next and it's still AWE some! So of course, after the annual living room Easter Egg hunting sibling rivalry, we boarded "Brilliance of the Seas" to see the Med... and brilliant it was. "Suite" was the



to



family's reaction to our onboard accommodations. Michael and Carissa quickly grasped the significance of their "gold card" onboard so except for stops in Palermo, Athens, Rhodes, Alexandria, Egypt, Cyprus, Malta and finally Barcelona, we rarely saw them. In Egypt we booked a private "beep beep" taxi for the three hour trip inland to the pyramids. As you can see in the picture we were asphixiated while there – a phrase that doesn't begin to describe the low crawl into the pyramid to see the empty room. On board, Carissa hit it off with the Beatles (John Lennon was the best) while the parents tried to Tango. Our bartender Eric's liberal interpretation of happy hour kept things well lubricated.



Once firmly back on mostly dry land (it rains in Belgium you know) it was time to run and jump, in other words, Track. The rambling Ryans acquitted themselves admirably once again sprinting and leaping to places at the European Championships with Michael hurdling home with Team MVP honors for the season and Carissa finishing her high school sports career with 12 varsity letters. The spring in their steps in April and May surely meant Carissa's graduation from the Brussels American High School was coming fast (sniff, sob), but first: Carissa performed as the Master of Ceremonies (female) at the Annual Talent Show, both attended the Prom (not together), and both our progeniuses reaped awards at the end of year ceremonies, including Michael's Einsteinian physics score and Carissa's announced "senior" ambition to "change the world" – you go girl! Graduation itself was in the infamous Brussels town hall on the "Grand Place" in central Brussels – A flight of fancy to behold and beheld it we did. Tia Judy and Tio Robert's presents and presences were an added treat to be sure.

Taking advantage of relatives with money, Mike whisked his sister Judy and the aforementioned Roberto off to France. Why? Because it's there (and the foods good, and and and), but mostly to go to the 65th Anniversary of D-Day festivities including the Heads of State speeches on Omaha beach (well, near it anyway). Literally in the last row we took in everything with an appropriate air of gratitude, in particular for our dear Uncle Dick who had his beach holiday three score and five years earlier on that spot rudely interrupted by some unwanted kinetic attention at an un-Godly hour during something called the first wave. From there, a rip roaring pass through Paris, a champagne stay at the French Officers' Club, a late night Bateaux Mouches (yes, that's legal in France), a walk up the Eifel Tower (key word "up"), and a visit in the rain to our childhood apartment at le Petit Beaurigard made for an excellent sibling sabbatical. Then, of course, Mike and Gloria just had to go to the Paris Air



Show to, get this, “work.” Gloria still can’t decide if she likes her cocktails at the Louvre, in the Opera, or at some swank hotel (where an artist drew a great caricature of the two of us that I’m not allowed to print here...oh, what the heck). July meant the kids annual pilgrimage to Rock Werchter (Belgian for Woodstock) and of course, Carissa’s birthday and this the big ONE EIGHT, which means she still can’t drink at college for three more years (yeah!). A piñata party and a traditional “kids” party marked the transition and we



celebrated another transition as Sureshot did me the honor of allowing me to return the favor by inviting me to preside over his retirement ceremony. Great friends, great Americans, and a great family. Their daughter who is Carissa’s crib buddy (CB) Marlena Sureshot graduated right beside our baby girl in Brussels – another full circle of life (and on and on). This year’s Volvo+4 holiday was in fact a Rental+4+baggage Dixie invasion northward as Mike&Mike met C&G in Jacksonville (the girls were partying elsewhere) in mid-August for a “See America First” imposition on friends and family up the east coast. Our ultimate destination: Emmanuel College, Boston. But first, (the kids drug problem continued...they got drug here and drug there) visits to the Nathans and offspring / spouses in Florida, the Mighty Eighth in Savannah (new definition of HOT), the Juhl’s and their golf course-side palatial mansion in Charlotte, Gloria’s sister’s homestead near Yorktown, VA, then on to a multiple celebration family reunion of sorts at Mike’s sisters near DC (we presented Uncle Dick with a 65th D-Day anniversary shirt), followed by quick stops at Gettysburg and West Point just to reconfirm one’s Air Force inklings (no offense intended) prior to our arrival chez Webbs for the post-partum parting with our baby girl (sniff, sob, etc.), but before we did, we took in the sights of Boston together, not to mention way too much dessert at the Cheesecake factory – industrial portions to be sure! But, in the end, we left her there (with 280,000 other college kids – no kidding) and after endlessly fascinating airline shenanigans Gloria and Michael returned to Belgium to begin the school year and Mike stayed to play. There are serendipitous opportunities in life one simply must not pass up, and such an occasion came next. In short, Mike flew on the B-17 Aluminum Overcast with COL Bill Scott, former Group Operations



Officer of Mike’s father’s WWII bomb group the 398th BG. If that weren’t enough, the 398th BG Memorial Association to which they both belong played a significant part in this planes restoration, so much so that the plane is painted in 398th wartime colors and

markings. An AWE inspiring experience. Thanks Bill! More serendipity as Mike’s job (notice I didn’t say “work”) took him to the Boeing plant in Philadelphia where he ran into his first cousin Tim who gave him a back stage tour of a great American enterprise. Well, other than the now obligatory Volleyball championship, a few trips to Paris und Bayern geh, and winter (-20C) “training” with Finns and other Europeans north of the Arctic Circle on Operation BEAR, that about covers it for yours truly. Carissa (aka “Porta-Party”) is now a Bostonian, but a faithful Steelers terrible-towel-waving fan and a red head! Skype her to see. College life in close proximity to Best Buy, Starbucks, ad nauseum seems to agree with her as do the many local concerts (e.g. Say Anything – I wonder what their lyrics are like?) and other diversions (yet she still made the Dean’s List! Yeah=safe scholarship!). Multiple visitors and multiple care packages have the local kids feeling abandoned (visitors included Mommykins, Aunt Margaret, best friends Georgia (Italian), Sarah (via Brussels) and Patrick. Thanks to the Webbs for adopting her (need a place to make chocolate chip cookies afterall) and for those keeping score on the Sacred Family tallysheet, add her Dell Laptop studio XPS, TV, Boy Toy (Josh), roomie Hannah Lane, and the miracle kitten “Moonbeam” who has the sad but welcome duty of filling Stripes’ former role. Long-time readers will rest assured Squirelly is still Patriarch. The CB’s (aka Brussels’ Daughters) did the home crowd proud by raising over



\$3000 in the New York City Breast Cancer Walk while enjoying a cold pouring rain no less. Michael me boy is, to put it mildly, the real deal, the bomb, the whatever your age or genre depict as a superlative and on and on... Now 17, now a victim of Senior Tributes for Cross Country, almost wrestling, and soon-to-be track, our young physicist is kickin’ butt in AP classes (or vice-versa), sports (x-country, some wrestling, jumping and hurdling) and of course, with Nicky Fox the foxy new love interest... and boy can she bake cakes (wait until next year to hear) Michael is a man

about town (he likes to wear his Tux to school) who enjoyed the Cross Country Team’s victory at Europeans and his own stellar performance on the Physics SAT (I didn’t know they had one...can you say, orbital mechanics? I knew that you could). Of important note, M’s friend Gato passed this year and now Obi Wan is king (Moonbeam’s brother). The frenetic friend famously feasting on fascinating food and frivolously frolicking in fantastic fantasies, Gloria, having kicked the butt of the big BC, is still the language goddess, the cooking queen, the chocolate-shopping captain, and the recipe writing regent of the NATO ladies who lunch club and she’s still having, despite surgery, chemo and soon-to-be radiation a most fabulous experience in this life and on this planet. An inspiration to us all, she’s a wonder.



Finally, as is our custom please join us in inviting our Lord to watch over our coalition troops as they go into battle today! Godspeed. -- Mike, Gloria, Carissa & Michael Ryan +32 (0)2 782 0535 www.annual-wee-epistle.com